



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Airpower Summary: 1-7 Jan 2012** **AWACS crew coordinates rescue in Afghanistan**

SOUTHWEST ASIA -- Helping rescue downed pilots isn't something Airmen aboard an E-3 Sentry do regularly, but that's exactly what happened to one crew from the 380th Air Expeditionary Wing Dec. 30.

Two hours into the Sentry crew's planned mission, they received a mayday call, relayed through a KC-135 Stratotanker, from an AH-64 Apache helicopter. The Apache pilots' wingmen had crashed in northern Afghanistan. The two pilots were okay, but they were going to need help getting back to base.

That's when the E-3 Airmen diverted from their scheduled flight plan. After all, lives were at stake, said Maj. Paul Lankes, the mission crew senior director.

According to Lankes, rescuing the Soldiers was going to take the combined effort from several elements, but command and control is what Sentry crews do best. The E-3 is an airborne warning and control system, or AWACS, aircraft. With the advanced radar and computer systems aboard the plane, the crews are able to manage a battlespace of more than 250 miles around them.

The Sentry Airmen coordinated actions of several crews engaged in the rescue: the pilots on the ground, the Apache still airborne, senior leaders at the combined air and space operation center and even a pair of coalition F-16s nearby.

"We knew the guys on the ground were going to need armed overwatch, so we called in the F-16s, who were at the end of their patrol, but they flew out to look out for the Soldiers," said Lankes, who is deployed from Kadena Air Base, Japan, to the 964th Expeditionary Airborne Air Control Squadron. "They told us they were low on fuel, so that meant we'd need a tanker. Fortunately, there was one close and available."

The Sentry team called the KC-135 crew who took the initial distress call to see if they were able to refuel the F-16s. Two other tankers from the 376th Air Expeditionary Wing took over refueling duties for other jets in the area, so the original crew was free to help the F-16s.

Once they were ready again, the F-16s helped the remaining Apache crew provide air cover until a convoy from a nearby outpost arrived to collect the crew. Additional helicopters landed and troops recovered the AH-64 wreckage.

To read the full story visit <http://www.380aew.afcent.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123285121>



SOUTHWEST ASIA -Maintenance Airmen prepare an E-3 Sentry airborne warning and control systems aircraft for takeoff while an F-15C Eagle flies by Jan. 5, 2012. The E-3 is deployed to the 380th Air Expeditionary Wing from Tinker Air Force Base, Okla. An E-3 crew from Kadena Air Base, Japan, coordinated the rescue of a crashed AH-64 Apache helicopter crew in Afghanistan Dec. 30, 2012. (U.S. Air Force photo/Tech. Sgt. Arian Nead)

The Combined Forces Air Component Commander's airpower data for the week of 1-7 Jan 2012:

## Airpower Summary for the week of 1-7 Jan 2012

Close Air Support	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	TOTAL
Operation Enduring Freedom	72	78	74	69	49	60	78	480
Operation New Dawn	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Weapons Releases								
OEF	6	3	0	0	0	3	6	18
OND	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ISR								
OEF	86	94	70	79	75	90	104	598
OND	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Combined Data								
Airlift Sorties	109	119	128	96	64	102	99	717
Airlift Cargo (Short Tons)	394	634	646	468	544	589	494	3,769
Airlift Passengers	2,053	2,102	2,215	1,639	1,132	2,511	2,987	14,639
Tanker Sorties	39	40	43	39	38	33	36	268
Fuel Offloaded (Thousands of Pounds)	3,002	2,772	2,899	2,817	2,431	1,919	3,082	18,922
Aircraft Refueled	202	179	184	189	135	114	206	1,209
PR/Medevac Sorties	14	21	25	24	11	16	13	124
Saves	2	6	5	4	2	2	1	22
Assist	2	3	6	5	6	5	3	30

(To see the complete CFACC Airpower Statistics, current as of December 31, 2011, please visit:

<http://www.afcent.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-120102-001.pdf>

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